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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 NEW DELHI 000904

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SUBJECT: DEOBANDI MODERATES TRUMP HARDLINERS, BUT DEEP  
FISSURES REMAIN

REF: NEW DELHI 623

Classified By: DepPolCouns Atul Keshap for reasons 1.4 (B,D)

**¶1. (C) Summary:** At a March 6 meeting of Jamiat Ulema-i-Hind (JUH), the political wing of the influential conservative Darul Uloom Deoband madrassa, the anti-US General Secretary Mahmood Madani summarily dismissed the more moderate President Arshad Madani, and tried to install his own candidate. However, Arshad refused to accept the decision and boycotted the meeting. After three weeks of sparring in the press, Mahmood backed down, lacking numerical support within the organization. The triumph of restraint represents a positive sign for US interests as they relate to the continued moderation of Indian Muslims. It is also helpful for the Congress Party's Muslim vote bank calculations. The party has served as the political patron of Deoband and JUH since before independence. A takeover by Mahmood would have shifted JUH's allegiance to his patrons in the Samajwadi Party. On March 24 Mahmood resigned as General Secretary but rest assured, we have not seen the last of Maulana Mahmood Madani. End Summary.

Power Play for Control

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**¶2. (U) At a March 6 meeting, Mahmood Madani, General Secretary of Jamiat Ulema-i-Hind (JUH), the political wing of**

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the influential conservative Darul Uloom Deoband madrassa, made a power play for control of the organization by dismissing its President, Arshad Madani. Terming the move unconstitutional, Arshad walked out of the meeting with his supporters and refused to accept the decision. Mahmood named Quari Mohammad Usman, Deputy Director of Deoband, as caretaker president. A meeting of 5,000 JUH delegates was then called for March 24 to approve the dismissal.

Lacking Numbers, Mahmood Backs Down

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**¶3. (U) As March 24 approached, both camps traded insults in the press with neither side willing to retreat. Fearing a**

split in one of the leading Indian Islamic organizations, several Muslim leaders including Maulana Marghoobur Rehman, Chief Rector of Darul Uloom Deoband, called for a compromise solution. Finally on March 24, Mahmood backed down, cancelling the delegate meeting and resigning as General Secretary. Quari Mohammad Usman resigned as well.

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Reportedly, Mahmood did not have the numerical support to force the change. The two men left that day for Umra in Saudi Arabia, and neither has commented publicly.

Short Background on JUH and the Madani Family

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¶4. (C) Founded in 1919, JUH is a political movement that participated in the freedom struggle and opposed Partition. The organization (as well as Deoband) has always supported the Congress Party and has historical ties to the Nehru-Gandhi family. When longtime JUH President Asad Madani died in 2007, a power struggle ensued. Asad's brother Arshad became President, while Asad's son Mahmood became General Secretary. Arshad, as part of the older generation, has

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remained loyal to the Congress Party, while Mahmood has looked elsewhere for support and financial backing, particularly to Samajwadi Party (SP) leaders Mulayam Singh Yadav and Amar Singh and their less than transparent fundraising. Mahmood currently serves as a member of the Rajya Sabha from the SP ally Rashtriya Lok Dal party from Uttar Pradesh and has towed a very aggressive anti-Congress and anti-US line. In 2005 he organized street demonstrations during President Bush's visit to India. Difference of opinion on political patronage however, primarily drove the split with his uncle and led to the March 6 confrontation.

Comment: What Does This All Mean?

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¶5. (C) Comment: Arshad's triumph can be taken as a positive sign for US interests as they relate to the continued moderation of Indian Muslims. Embassy contacts report that during the February 25 anti-terrorism conference at Deoband (reftel), Arshad and other old guard leaders such as Chief Rector Rehman (who hosted Poloffs during a November 2007 visit) focused on the anti-terrorism message. Mahmood and his supporters did the US bashing. While Mahmood is the young nephew fighting the old uncle, this dispute is not a simple generational split. All of Poloff's younger Deobandi contacts have sided with the older Arshad (and therefore the Congress Party). Politically, the Congress Party will welcome Arshad's success as well, keeping this leading Muslim organization under its decades-old relatively moderate patronage as national polls approach. With the party struggling (particularly in Uttar Pradesh) and looking at a possible tie-up with the SP, the conflict may die down if Mahmood's SP paymasters urge him to pull back while they slow dance with the Congress. The SP, however, would love to have its man as President of a unified JUH. We have not seen the last of Maulana Mahmood Madani. End Comment.

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